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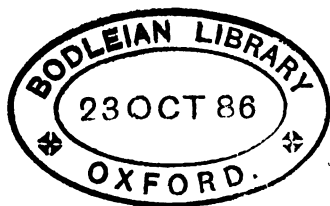
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A LECTURE
ON THE
HISTORY, PROGRESS, AND PRESENT STATE
OF
ART EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

BY THE
HON. MR. PRIMROSE,
TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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A LECTURE.

I HAVE experienced, I confess, not only great gratification, but also considerable surprise at having been invited to address a few words to you this evening: gratification on account of the sentiments that have been so kindly expressed towards me; surprise because I am so fully conscious how incompetent I am to do justice to however trifling a theme. The reason therefore why I consented to speak on this subject was, not that I considered myself able to cope with any authors who have ever treated of it, but because it, of all others, most deeply interests me, and is of the chiefest importance to you. And as preface I may remark that I have taken especial pains to avoid all arguments about such subjects as can be only referred to questions of propriety and taste; and that I have undertaken to trace, as far as I am able, the gradual

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development of Art in this country, not to point out what I consider to be the correct and most beautiful style. I have therefore abstained from drawing any comparisons between what I might establish as indisputably right, and that which I might condemn as absolutely wrong: for I consider that it is not only difficult but even vainglorious for one man, however educated and refined his taste might be, to seek to determine by his private opinions what others are bound to admire and imitate. It is not by any contrasts, however startling, between ideal beauty and actual reality that we can expect any greater artistic feeling to be developed in this country; for that which some might condemn, others might prize, and that which one might deride, another might loudly praise; but it is by a strict adherence to all the guiding principles of Art, and an accurate investigation as to their soundness and truth, that such an object can be attained. Art depends as much upon the mind as upon the hands of those who attempt it. It is not a mere question as to what attracts the eye or rivets the attention: I have no doubt but that if it were, many would infinitely prefer the garishness of modern to the mellow tints of ancient works; but we have to consider further, when we examine a production, the poetry and sentiment

that have called it forth, or the grace that it expresses.

We shall best observe the progress of Art by the separate examination of its branches; and I shall consider, under the title of branches, all the sciences and manufactures which have received its impress. It has been truly remarked that every science has its corresponding art, because in life all our thought has an aim in action under pain of becoming sterile or fantastic. But although Art is necessary as a primary impulse and a concurrent aim to science, yet, at a certain period of advancement, it is indispensable that we should accurately separate them. Their respective domains are distinct though united. To one belongs knowledge with prevision as result; to the other, power with action as result. But as soon as Science becomes fairly constituted, it must pursue its own development without any regard to other aims than those of knowledge. With the lapse of years, many useful and beautiful arts have either become degenerated or have altogether been forgotten. No doubt in the Dark ages which followed the comprehensive Roman age and preceded the beauties of the Italian schools, few made it their object to preserve the secrets by which many of the ancient works were executed; certain it is we have altogether lost the

arts of engraving on crystals or granite which the Egyptians practised, or the art of producing those gorgeous colours which we see in old glass, such as that of the Venetians, and some specimens of which, obscured by dirt, are still remaining in the windows of King's College Chapel. Again, though till the time of Cimabue all painting was carried on through the medium of caustic or water colours, the ancient frescoes are as vivid and fresh as on the first day of their commencement, while now those which decorate the newly-built Houses of Parliament in London are already fading and peeling away. In jewelry we can also observe, on comparison with the few ancient specimens which still exist to us, how Art has so degenerated, as it becomes now more a question of solidity than of ornament. While abroad I heard of an example of this. A beautifully finished antique chain was found among the ruins of Pompeii, and shewn to the principal goldsmith at Rome, who alone, of all I have ever seen, most closely imitates and reproduces old work. This man declared it quite beyond his power to copy it, for either he had not sufficient delicacy of manipulation, or the art of executing such ornaments had completely declined. A similar reflection was a sorrowful one to Gibson the sculptor, who exclaimed, when examining a newly-discovered

bronze figure of Hercules, How melancholy it was to consider that after all his life of labour and toil he had never acquired so great and so thorough a knowledge, or attained to such a pitch of perfection, as in that before him there.

The art of enameling is another of those that have almost entirely declined since the 17th century. In England few examples remain which can shew how far this branch of art was cultivated, or what a degree of excellence it reached. The most celebrated is the jewel which from its superscription has received the name of Alfred, and which was found near Athelney Abbey. The method employed in its construction has been that which is now known as the *Cloisonné*, and it shows evidence that the Saxons had arrived at a great skill in such manufacture. Since then, however, the decadence of such work in Great Britain is most marked, and at the present day it may be said to have almost entirely ceased. At Limoges in France, on the other hand, Limousin succeeded in producing the most beautiful enamels that have ever been made, and during the 16th century this art became excessively flourishing in that country. Several methods of enameling were practised. The earliest of these, said to have been known to the Egyptians, is called the *Champlevé*, by which the vitreous bodies form-

ing the colours are placed in cavities made in the metal plate itself. The Cloisonné, to which I have before alluded, consisted in the outlining the designs with narrow rims of gold which contained the different hues, and separated them one from another. These arts have now become nearly utterly extinct; and if enameling is now ever exercised, it is only made the vehicle for enhancing the beauty of other materials, and is not employed merely by itself as a decoration.

Before I entirely leave this subject I might mention the art of making cameos, which has survived up to this time with very nearly all its old prestige. Cameos were so highly esteemed by the ancients that they were used to embellish not only their dresses, but also their furniture and utensils. The largest onyxes and the utmost care were necessary for their manufacture; and to produce the right colour for the stones Pliny records that they were boiled for days and weeks in honey and water. One single onyx is preserved at St. Petersburg which measures 11 inches by 9, and on which is engraved the apotheosis of Augustus. At the present time stones for this purpose are found at Oberstein; but to reduce the expenses incident on cameo sculpture, it has been discovered that certain shells, of the Nautilus class, possess the

necessary strata of colour, are capable of the requisite polish, and to all appearances answer equally well. Old plate, again, though not as a rule so solid, generally presents a greater variety and beauty of shape than that of the present day ; and whether the substance be thin or massive, malleable, ductile, or excessively tenacious and hard, much more was made out of it, and much more art expended on its fashioning. But though from this, as from many other works, not only the skill but even the knowledge of production has departed, it must be remembered that there are still many arts in which we shew a decided superiority to former ages. And I may add, a superiority not only in form and shape, but even in material and colour. But we must be careful, however, lest we imagine that this result is entirely due to the existence of any greater artistic feeling in this country ; for it can be too easily traced, I think, not only to the much more extended education we possess, by the introduction of greater facilities of printing, but also to accident. For instance, it is curious to examine the causes which led to the improvements of pottery and porcelain. The boiling over of a pot through the carelessness of a servant gave rise to the idea for a new glaze ; the flints used to medicate a horse's eyes first suggested to

Astbury a new ingredient ; while the earth which was employed in the construction of the most beautiful china abroad, was discovered in the following manner. A certain farmer returning from a fair was benighted, and to reach his home was directed to traverse a white clayey morass, some of which stuck in the hoofs of his horse. Happening to show this mud to a friend of his, a valet in the service of Bötticher the alchemist, it occurred to the latter that it would make an excellent hair powder, and brought some away for that purpose. He mentioned the subject to his master, and showed him with pride the acquisition he had made. Bötticher was at that time anxious about the invention of a certain porcelain with which he hoped to be able to imitate the ware of the extreme east ; it struck him that this powder was the very material for which he was seeking, and enquiring further in the matter, thus discovered mines in Saxony which yield kaolin similar to that found in China.

The history of the rise of the Potteries in our own country is no less interesting. A little more than a century ago the only manner by which the supply of earthenware vessels was maintained in England was by means of itinerant hawkers, who fashioned their pots of clay and

decorated them with the rudest devices one day, and then carried them into the nearest market-town for sale on the next. These vessels were not so uncouth as at first might be imagined; they laid no claim to much symmetry, or any sign which could show skilful workmanship; they sufficed to do their duty, were watertight, covered with a rough glaze, and most probably commodious enough, but there was in them an absence of all attempt at great beauty. So long as no regular manufactory was established, and no directing hand to guide their efforts in art, these ignorant pedlars were content if their wares sold, and did not concern themselves much as to their fashion. They settled where they found clay, and founded small communities wherever they discovered sufficient materials; but the trade was still carried on by the means of wandering men, not by any settled commerce. To John Dwight of Fulham belongs the honour of having founded the first regular manufacture of pottery: but few specimens of his ware remain. On the Continent, on the other hand, great perfection in the making of earthenware had been reached long before; and in France there had appeared in the middle of the 16th century a man called Palissy, whose labours to detect the method in which old enamels were

made, after sixteen years were crowned with success, and who gave to the world specimens of ware which are reckoned as beautiful and as valuable as any made before or after, while in Italy Luca della Robbia designed and executed pieces of pottery, which are so highly esteemed as to fetch in the present day as much as £400 a plate. Little encouragement was offered, however, in England to any suggested improvements; and though some manufactories were fixed in Staffordshire, and some reforms carried out, yet our potteries were by no means capable of competing with those abroad. The great secret of this success among the foreign works was the union between the designer and the manufacturer. The latter understood and appreciated the value of the former, great artists even consented to sketch the patterns for a cartoon or a plaque, and the value of the connection was acknowledged by both. In those days, too, there were no institutions for instruction in art, and no facilities afforded for any such education except for those fortunate enough to be admitted into the studios of the great painters; yet it is a wonderful fact how the constant contact with objects of beauty and artistic merit developed the national taste, and by exalting the human intellect urged the production of works unsurpassed in any age of

further advancement. In England, however, ninety years ago arose a man who revolutionized the condition which I have attempted to describe; a man, too, who, though uneducated and labouring under all the disadvantages of ill health, was yet able to become the founder of all those vast and well-organised manufactories which now make some of the finest crockery in the world. Wedgewood devoted the whole of his life not only to the amelioration of the colour and shapes of his pottery, but also to that of its materials; and he so far succeeded in his undertaking that now-a-days it has been found to be utterly impossible to reproduce some of his most delicate tints. He had his object so thoroughly to his heart, he was so anxious to perfect that on which he was engaged, that he was wise enough to see that by himself he could not do all, and so summoned to his aid the greatest sculptor and designer of his age, namely, Flaxman. Flaxman entering fully into the scheme and most ably assisting his friend, the two made their objects identical, and therefore prospered. The one by the beauty of his shapes and the purity of his ornament, the other by the excellence of his pottery, formed an entirely distinct school, which eventually executed ware as valuable and as much sought after as any contemporary samples of foreign work. The

consequence of these endeavours is that for stoneware and earthenware England is now unrivalled. The ordinary table services of English earthenware and all useful and ornamental domestic articles are cheaper and of a far superior quality than what can be made in France, which once excelled in this line, though there large factories are however still kept going by the artificial aid of government protection.

In connection with the great potteries of England it would not be amiss to briefly glance at the gradual progress of porcelain. The first works established in this country were those of Chelsea, of which the china is still most highly appreciated. The characteristics of old Chelsea are a mass of decoration and a redundancy of gilding, but the painting is first-rate and the gold excessively brilliant. These manufactories came into full operation about the year 1750, and good specimens of the china are now rare and fetch enormous prices. We read of, for instance, one piece selling for £350, and a set of seven vases being purchased for 3000 guineas. In 1784 a Mr. Dewsbury removed the works and incorporated them with those at Derby, which are celebrated for the production of a certain biscuit ware, the secret of which is now lost. It is curious that in the attempts to rediscover this pro-

cess the beautiful material called Parian was accidentally found out. During the same date great manufactories of porcelain were also carried on at Worcester, the productions of which are greatly esteemed for the beauty of their patterns and exquisite finish of their painting; while in the present day Messrs. Minton and Copeland, the one by the earthenware and porcelain, the other by his Parian, still maintain the reputation formed by these earlier works. It is said that Great Britain employs a larger number of skilled workmen than any other nation in Europe, and she still preserves her just fame for high quality, especially in her machinery, glass, earthenware, china, etc. But for the introduction of novel designs Paris is still the mart of Europe. France still must be considered to be most deeply sensible of any artistic influences, which she is constantly nourishing by the aid of her beautiful buildings, her magnificent academies, and the encouragement given to artists in all branches of painting and sculpture. Still, as the advancing intellect of Great Britain receives a higher artistic education through our museums, galleries and schools of art, which will not fail ultimately to cultivate native taste, there can be no reason why we should not also compete with our talented neighbours in the poetry of Industrial

Art. But, primarily, the same common feeling must animate employers and workmen as in France. Each Frenchman is taught to draw, and his fancy is encouraged to design from the moment that he has mastered the rudiments of his own language. He does not merely attend a certain number of hours at a school of art, he learns to feel with his master, to be actuated with the same impulse, and to be guided by his experience. Again, each manufacturer employs an artist to plan for him the work he is about to undertake; no man simply selected because proficient in his class, but one educated and refined, and generally imbued with that sentiment which vivifies and exalts all efforts in art. To quote a truth enunciated by Ruskin in his address at Cambridge last May, we ought not to give a man merely the education of an artist, but we ought to give him the education of a gentleman. We learn by rote the construction of certain figures, the preparation of certain hues; but without a liberal education we can not give to those figures the idealism of life, or to those tints the freshness of reality. A man is not necessarily an artist because he has been taught by progressive steps to copy with a certain degree of accuracy, and not to falter in the construction of a straight line; he requires within him a cultivated mind, a refined intellect,

which is to impart some life, some degree of soul to that on which he is occupied. This theory is the very foundation and prop of sculpture. Sculptures are produced by mechanical measurements from models in any plastic material ; the subject to be treated is viewed from every point and copied with the utmost care in all its proportions and in all its symmetry ; but that which communicates to statues their appearance of life and their semblance of action is not the hand but the genius of the artist. This it is in pieces of old English sculpture which we admire and seek to imitate ; for it must be borne in mind, when we criticise the productions of early artists, that they had no knowledge of anatomy, were possessed of no books or prints wherewith to be guided and instructed, and, until the days of Bacon, had not the faintest idea of perspective and optics. Yet, with all these drawbacks, a charm and a grace sometimes exists in these rude figures, for which we in vain look in many of our modern works. It cannot be maintained, however, that this art flourished greatly in England in early times. If some important monument were to be erected, some beautiful chapel to be decorated, artists from abroad were employed ; and if they did not actually do the work entirely with their own hands, they superintended, and in

all cases entirely guided those of native artificers. It is easy to discover instances of this. Those fine memorials which Edward I. constructed to the memory of his queen were designed and executed by an Italian called Pisano. Again, when Henry VII. purposed to raise a chapel for the reception of his tomb he gave the order to a foreigner named Torrigiano; and this was in an age when sculptors were so esteemed in other countries that this same man Torrigiano was afterwards condemned to torture and death in Spain for having destroyed one of his own masterpieces, for which he considered he had received an inadequate reward. Even as late, again, as the days of Charles I., when he, one of the greatest patrons of art of the day, desired to have a bust made of himself, he was first compelled to be taken in three poses by Vandyck, and then to send the drawings to Bernini, the sculptor at Rome, as no native artist was deemed sufficiently talented to undertake it. The ruthless destruction, in the days of Henry VIII., of all the gorgeous decorations of our religious institutions gave a great check to art in this country. The figures which adorned our churches were ordered to be either mutilated or destroyed, the frescoes and paintings defaced or burnt; and it is more than probable that it is only the vast

number of these works which prevented their entire extermination. To quote the words of Flaxman, "these commands effectually prevented the artist from suffering his mind to rise in the contemplation or execution of any sublime effort, as he dreaded a prison or the stake, and reduced him in future to the miserable mimicry of monstrous fashions or drudgery in the lowest mechanism of his profession." It was the same with painting. Few people excelled in this art in England till a very late period. The walls of houses and the interiors of churches were either clumsily ornamented by some uncouth representation of a sacred subject generally monochromatic, or dotted over with diapers; but the first existing detached portrait only dates from 1380, and from that time till the days of Hogarth, Hudson, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, no country is so destitute in painters that have ever since attained to note. Not that their numbers were by any means few, for Walpole relates that previous to the days of George I. there were one hundred and three native artists, none of whom are remembered except Riley. Since that day, however, the advance of painting in this country has been wonderful. The establishment of a Royal Academy in 1768 did much to found a national school. We boast as peculiar to and

excellent in this school of some of the finest colourists and delineators of character that have lived in modern times; and though, perhaps, in the present day the conceptions of our artists may not be as grand or their vigour and action so marked as in the works of the French or German schools, yet there exist a grace and a sentiment in them which we fail to observe elsewhere, while Turner has imparted to landscape-painting a character which it has not received since its commencement by Giorgione. If we regard the prices even paid for pictures in the 19th century, we shall perceive a wonderful difference to the prices paid to artists in the days when an Emperor deigned to pick up a painter's pencils. Then we read of how artists, such as Correggio, had to paint a sign-board so as to be enabled to pay his tavern score, how he sold his chef-d'œuvre for 100 ducats, and how Vandyke was paid £20 for a portrait which would now fetch £1700. Now-a-days we hear of Frith selling pictures at £8700, and Holman Hunt parting with his masterpiece for more than £5000. I do not wish to prove that these prices indicate a great increase of art in this country, for there are a multitude of causes which can answer for the vast contrast of which I have endeavoured to show a few examples; but I think that we can safely

deduce from such facts that pictures are more esteemed and prized in this century than in the last. It is only a pity that the great encouragement given to most branches of art in the present day should not extend to historical or portrait painting. The former has scarcely been introduced, and to a great measure photography has superseded the latter. So long as our national buildings, our churches, palaces, or even private houses, are deemed to be sufficiently imposing and magnificent without the aid of frescoes or mosaics, it cannot be expected that representations of any but sentimental and minor subjects should flourish in England. When we visit edifices like those at Venice or Pavia, and observe how by the introduction of coloured marbles, variously tinted bricks, and of broad massive mosaics, a splendid result is attained, we can easily account for the superexcellence of the old Italian schools in this line. While, when it was being thought in England that the pressing and overwhelming exigencies of a Reformation demanded the expulsion from our cathedrals or chapels of any bright colour that might relieve the bareness of the interiors, or any figure that might break the monotony of the walls, such gorgeous structures as St. Peter's or the Cathedral at Florence were being erected, and sta-

tues such as the Laocoon, Belvidere, and Venus de' Medici were being disintombed, which would attract the admiration and wonder of the world for centuries after. It was only till the days of Pugin that the slumbering national taste was awakened, and that it was perceived that for ages works and monuments had been desecrated and destroyed in which it for the first time discovered beauties. It was then that the English were led to discern that the principle of gothic architecture and decoration did not consist, as they had imagined, in a mass of cumbrous ornament, but in a grand simplicity of outline ; and that the mediæval period was not so barbarous and uneducated as to prevent the completion of works with which the degeneracy of a latter age found itself unable to cope. Pugin effected as great an alteration in our architecture as Wedgewood did in our potteries. He did not rest content with merely pointing out to his countrymen the mistakes they had committed or the want of taste in which they had so long indulged, but he attacked their national prejudices and their native pride, and eventually succeeded in not only establishing his own credit, but in obtaining his object, and again introducing Architecture as a fine art. But we are not to stop at this point. We must not rest content at the threshold of that

after which we ought to strive. A building is not completed when the masonry has been finished or the wooden joinings and floorings laid down. If it is expected that it should be regarded as a great undertaking, it must receive those additions of painting and sculpture which will constitute it as worthy of imitation and as a finished work of art. If any of my hearers now present have ever in their lives visited the interior of Ely Cathedral, and have noticed the magnificent and patriotic manner in which the work of restoration has been there performed, they may rest assured that there they have beheld the most perfect example of what the interior of a Gothic cathedral was ; and that, though there may be seen far finer exteriors, taken as a whole that church is the most splendid of internal renovation that I think remains in France or England. And in regarding such a work as that, we are naturally led to examine some quality which originates in the birth of the art itself, increases in its growth, strengthens in its vigour, attains the full measure of beauty in the perfection of its parent cause, and in its decay, withers and expires. Such a quality, to quote from Flaxman, will define the stages of its progress, and will mark the degrees of its abasement ; it will point out how and when proportions were obtained

by measure and calculation; when geometrical figures, more simple or complicated, decided form; how the harmony of lines in composition produce energy by contrast, and sympathy by assimilation. Such a quality immediately determines to our eyes and understanding the barbarous attempt of the ignorant savage, the humble labour of the mere workman, the highest examples of art conducted by science, ennobled by philosophy, and perfected by the zealous and extensive study of nature. This distinguishing quality is understood by the term of style in the arts of design, which, though first applied to poetry, now aptly is expressive of the genius and productions of the artist. And by the term style we designate the several stages of progression, improvement, or decline of the art, so that we more directly relate to the progress of the human mind and states of society. It is a combination of the natural style as applied to humanity and the ideal style as applied to divinity which produces a masterpiece, for with every branch of art we shall for the most part find ourselves associated by the same guiding principles and the same leading ideas. In England our schools of painting were and are still divided into two factions, the Pre-Raphaelite and the Raphaelite. It is the poetry that produces, not the style that governs,

pictures, which has produced this result. The Pre-Raphaelite is understood to have combined two very distinct aims; first, the intellectual elevation of art by the choice of noble and original subjects, and secondly, its technical advancement by a new and minute analysis of nature. It is a party which seeks the imitation of works such as those of Fra Angelico and Giotto, and which is anxious to enrol itself as enthusiastically following the simple and graceful outlines of Francia and Perugino. It is no ignoble ambition, and it shows a devotion to Art with which we should have failed to have met sixty years ago; but if this school really desires to resemble those masters which preceded Raphael, they should not adopt their mannerisms, but should imitate the grace of their compositions and the purity of their colours. In two words, Pre-Raphaelites are intellectual and analytic, both to a high degree; it is a movement with great ambition intellectually, and requiring great and arduous labour practically. We hear of how Gerard Douw was so attentive to extreme minutiae, that he employed five days in finishing a hand and three days on a broom: this is the analytic principle of these more modern artists. This innovation in our painting was doubtless due to the fact that the present generation have become more familiar with

literature than the last ; that scientific studies have expanded the mind, and by developing the intellect have accustomed us to a habit of analysis : but there is one criticism that must be passed on it. The aims of Pre-Raphaelism are so high, its pretensions so great, that it does not admit of mediocrity ; it must be either excessively good when it is marvellous, or extremely bad when it is worthless. It would have been impossible to artists like Turner or even Michael Angelo, whose conceptions were so rapid and whose fancies were so multitudinous, to have become sufficiently minute to have constituted one of this class. The genius who must excel in this work must be one more methodical, more patient, and even then that will be one of a very superlative order who can impart to all the minute objects on which it labours so long, that unity and that sentiment which create a masterpiece. I am aware that it is expected by Ruskin that this movement will effect a universal revolution in our school of painting, and that, that great enthusiast apostrophised Millais when he changed his style "as a change in his manner, not merely a fall but a catastrophe, not merely a loss of power but a reversal of principle ; his excellence has been effaced as a man wipeth a dish turning it upside down : " but it appears to me that

Pre-Raphaelites have now altogether retrograded so far, that his boast is impossible, and his indignation merely caused by regret. It will however delay me too much were I to enter too fully on this controversy, nor, I am afraid should I interest you greatly by so doing: but you will perceive that so long as a national school is universal, then it prospers; directly it be broken up and separated according to various tastes, then it can no longer exist. The British school as it now is has arrived at the highest excellence in every part which is duly patronized. There was only a brief period in our history when native artists excelled as portrait-painters. In earlier days foreign artists, such as Vandyck, were induced to come and reside here. This artist has enriched nearly every house in England with specimens of his excellence. He painted with extraordinary rapidity, generally finishing a portrait in the evening of the day on which it was commenced, only requiring a long morning and afternoon sitting, and his pictures convey to our minds an idea of dignity and grace which we have never seen surpassed. Sir P. Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller successively visited this country later, but, with the insignificant exception of Oliver and Dobson, no English artist of note took portraits regularly till the days of

Hudson, at the commencement of George III.'s reign. Hudson's likenesses were generally stiff and upright, and he was in the habit of painting several faces to a standard position, but he was in colour and naturalness a decided improvement to his predecessors. Sir Joshua Reynolds was Hudson's pupil, and he and Gainsborough have made their names celebrated by their colour, chiaroscuro, and the perfect freedom and *abandon* of their poses. But if native portrait-painting was, with these last brilliant exceptions, not of a high order of merit, the art of engraving was brought to a great state of perfection in this country by Woollett and Strange. Steel engraving had been discovered by a Florentine called Maso, in the first half of the 15th century. He was the first to make those beautiful decorations of plate which have received the name of Niello ware, and which consisted of a steel plate, the incisions and gravings on which were filled up with some precious metal, generally gold. This art, which was highly esteemed and in great demand in that century, has, I believe, been resuscitated by a Sheffield workman, who exhibited in one of the last great Exhibitions a cup ornamented after this fashion. It was considered so valuable in early days that an artist named Landino having sent to the Florentine republic a

book the binding of which was composed of this Niello work, he was recompensed with the grant of a castle. The only metal-work I have ever seen to at all resemble these productions has been some of that executed in India, in which elaborate patterns and every specimen of floriated decoration of gold are beaten by main force into soft steel. The metal-work of the mediæval times, however, was far superior to ours. They embellished the locks, the bolts, and the hinges of their doors; their fire-irons, dogs, and even their keys are perfect models of what can be done in that style, and those few samples that have survived to our times form patterns for our imitation. Two candlesticks of Tudor workmanship, beautiful specimens of ancient work, have fetched as much as £290 at a sale, and it is impossible to relate how highly such standards are rated in the present day. It is however very strange to observe, notwithstanding the excellence of our steel engraving as finished by Woollett, or our wood-cutting as perfected by Bewick, how entirely the art of etching was neglected till a very late period. This beautiful and scientific art is said to have taken its rise from Leonardo da Vinci, who is reported to have practised it as early as 1492. Rembrandt, however, was the artist who mostly excelled in it; his perfect knowledge of light

and shade, the vigour of his contrasts, and the atmosphere with which he surrounds his groups, have imparted to his prints a very high standard, and have procured for them an universal reputation. So highly are his impressions regarded and prized, that one this year was sold for the enormous sum of £1180, and that one not unique. The great charm which pervades such works is their accurate delineation of the mind and fancy of the artist. Etchings are rarely finished pictures, they are the crude sketches which reveal the poetry latent in the artist, in which he is sincere and natural, and where his autographic touch is visible. The uninformed spectator admires execution for itself as a handicraft with little reference to its meaning; but the true judge, as I have before essayed to impress on you, calls that the best execution in which there is most expressed, and only gives the rank of masterly execution to that which is replete with intelligence and significance. So entirely are the English inappreciative of this species of work, that a dealer once gave it as his opinion that the public did not care for etchings, they liked *hart*. Abroad, distinct etching associations and clubs are formed, which band together for the purpose of exhibiting their own productions and noticing any improvement which

might aid their execution. In England it would appear, however, that there are certain qualities of mechanical execution, which, quite independently of truth or invention, afford a keen satisfaction to uneducated spectators: in the machine-ruled engraving there exists a great charm, I daresay, in the clearness of the lines and painfully regular gradation secured in broad masses of sky or water, and no consideration is taken that such prints afford no indication of the genius or sentiment of the artist. When Ruskin, in one of his many admirable books, drew a contrast between a strictly beautiful windmill and one which was totally false, according to his rule, or between a purely gothic griffin and a monster which was based on wrong principles, his readers invariably chose the wrong one; and when Harding to exemplify a bad style made two drawings, the public infinitely preferred those two to all the rest in the book.

It is curious to see, while we yet remain in this branch of art, what very trifling causes regulate the prices of etchings and engravings. On one occasion Rembrandt, while entertaining a friend at dinner, had occasion to send for the mustard. The servant being very slow, the artist wagered his guest that he could etch the view out of his window in less

time than it would take to fetch the mustard. The view was taken, the bet won, and the impression of that plate is nearly priceless. One of our greatest English caricaturists and engravers having on the proofs of one of his prints omitted an 'r,' he inserted it in the next edition, and thereby caused the price of the former one to run up to a fabulous amount. Again, Hogarth, having in one of his plates entitled the "Modern Midnight Conversation," spelt 'modern' with two 'd's', English connoisseurs will be found who will make more than 70 guineas difference between the two. In all cases, however, great care ought to be taken not to regard the price as a correct indication of the value of the work, for numberless instances can be repeated when it is evident some fancy or some pretended superiority is made the vehicle for ruinous extravagance.

The great increase of Art in this country, and the greater respect that is paid to objects of antiquity, have occasioned great unfairness and shameful cheating in many instances. Stories are but too frequent in which fraud and imposition have been effected, and in which unwarrantable prices have been paid for comparatively worthless objects. In porcelain it will be discovered sometimes that the gilding has been purposely

tarnished, and pictures carefully stippled-in afresh in order to increase its value, while as to pictures a fixed occupation seems to exist among certain classes, either for the imitation of old masters, or for mellowing the tints of modern pictures by artificial means. One of the most peculiar of these frauds was the following story related in the *Cornhill Magazine*. A certain gentleman purchased for £55 a good copy of a Venus painted by Titian, to which he imagined he could ascribe a likeness to Mary Queen of Scots. Having parted with this miniature to a dealer, he happened to mention the fancied likeness he had observed, and was immensely confused to hear afterwards that this auctioneer had resold his copy for £560, as the only miniature ever painted by Titian representing the unfortunate Queen of Scotland. It was exhibited under this title, and more than a thousand people visited, and were credulous enough to believe in it.

I have thus endeavoured, as far as I am able, to give you a brief idea of the Progress and History of Art in England. Art is not confined merely to certain manufactures or certain pursuits; you can impress on any of your occupations or all your endeavours the signs of a mind cultivated and refined by artistic influences. The bindings of books may be made as beautiful as those of the

Lyonese Grolier of the 15th century ; the glass out of which you drink, the metal and crockery which you employ in eating, can both be made ornamental and be as solid as beautiful ; for it may be counted as a monstrous error the idea that seems to prevail generally that that which is cheap and common must be consequently hideous, and that all endeavours for true beauty must be necessarily attended with great expense. We cannot be said, you must bear in mind, to be a nation truly imbued with the principles of the poetry of industrial Art until we educate the mind as well as we instruct the hands of the artisan.

In conclusion, I have to thank you for the indulgence with which you met my imperfections, and for the favour with which you received my remarks. To lecture on such a great question as that of Art is an undertaking which, I am well aware, demands greater power and information than I possess ; for the critical examination of even one of its very numerous branches is a study to which we can devote a far longer time than I have employed over the few words I have spoken on them collectively : but I was positive that I could not attempt to lecture on anything more intimately connected with your interests, or one more instructive in the lessons it affords. I

consider that nothing can show the progress of Art so much as the cheerfulness with which audiences consent to be lectured on it. I feel sure that a grand future is now before the English people; that it will belong to themselves more than to others that now once that the path has been struck out for them they will not retrograde and fall back; and I am confident that in the rivalry for the first place in this life, and in the march of civilization that now takes place, England, having once put her hand to the plough, will not look back and so be lost.

THE END.

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